

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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R 231045Z AUG 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4684
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 1106

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, XI
SUBJ: LIBYAN FOREIGN POLICY LOOKS TOWARDS THE ARAB MAGREB

BEGIN SUMMARY. LOCAL PUBLICATION INDICATES SHIFT OF LIBYAN FOREIGN POLICY EMPHASIS FROM EGYPT TO LIBYA'S WESTERN NEIGHBORS. WEEKLY CONFESSES "ERROR" OF RCC EMPHASIS ON EGYPT AND NEED FOR STRONG ECONOMIC LINKS WITH ARAB WEST. DECISION APPEARS RELATED TO RECENT LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN BORDER SKIRMISHES AND APPARENT HEAVY LIBYAN MILITARY LOSSES OF MEN AND MATERIEL. IMPACT OF LOSS OF EGYPTIAN LABOR FOR LIBYA AND SIGNIFICANTLY LARGE REMITTANCES TO EGYPT REFLECTS INTERDEPENDENCE OF TWO ECONOMIES. END SUMMARY.

1. AN ARTICLE IN LIBYA'S WEEKLY PUBLICATION AL-USBU ASSEYASSI (POLITICAL WEEKLY) SUGGESTS THAT LIBYA'S ARAB FOREIGN POLICY EMPHASIS IN NORTH AFRICA WILL TAKE A 180-DEGREE TURN AND CONCENTRATE ON IMPROVING LIBYA'S
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RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA, ALGERIA AND POSSIBLY MOROCCO. THE ARTICLE, WRITTEN IN THE SEMI-OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT JOURNAL, SURPRISINGLY STATES THAT LIBYA'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL ERRED BY CONCENTRATING ON STRONG TIES WITH THE ARAB MASHREG (EGYPT AND THE ARAB NATIONS OF THE LEVANT AND GULF) WHILE PLACING LITTLE EMPHASIS ON LIBYA'S RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB MAGREB DESPITE "ITS

IMPORTANCE AND THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ECONOMIC TIES WHICH BIND LIBYA AND NORTH AFRICA." THE ARTICLE REPEATEDLY REFERS TO THE "ERROR COMMITTED BY THE RCC" OF CONCENTRATING UPON EGYPT WHILE ALMOST COMPLETELY DISREGARDING THE ARAB MAGREB. IT LAMENTS THAT "PAIN, BITTERNESS AND SHOCK" WERE THE RESULT OF LIBYAN EFFORTS TO COOPERATE WITH ITS EASTERN ARAB NEIGHBORS. THE ARTICLE REVEALS THAT THE RCC PLACED EMPHASIS ON RELATIONS WITH EGYPT BECAUSE OF ABDUL NASSER WHOM THE ARTICLE SAYS CONVINCED THE RCC TO ORIENT ITS POLICY EFFORTS EASTWARD. IT THEN ASKS RHETORICALLY WHAT IS LEFT OF ABDUL NASSER? IT RESPONDS, "NOTHING, THAT EVEN ABDUL NASSER'S NAME IS BLACKENED AND HIS IMAGE IS DISCREDITED VERY DAY." IT CLAIMS THAT NASSER'S PRINCIPLES ARE "VULGARIZED AND BRANDED IN THE ARAB MASHREG (READ EGYPT) AS HERESY AND REVISIONISM."

2. THE ARTICLE'S NAMELESS AUTHOR CALLS UPON LIBYANS TO NOW CONCENTRATE ON INFORMING THEMSELVES ABOUT THE MAGREB BY READING NEWSPAPERS AND LISTENING TO BROADCASTS FROM THE WEST. LIBYAN READERS ARE FURTHER INSTRUCTED THAT LIBYA MUST BUILD STRONG ECONOMIC LINKS WITH THIS AREA OF WHICH IT IS AN INTEGRAL AND IMPORTANT PART. THE ARTICLE STRESSES THAT LIBYA MUST TURN "ITS FACE TOWARDS THE MAGREB AND ITS BACK ON CONFIDENTIAL

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EGYPT." IT CONCLUDES BY STATING THAT THERE IS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CONTINUED "EXCESSIVE MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE ARAB EAST AND DISREGARD FOR THE DEEP TIES THAT BIND LIBYA WITH ITS WESTERN NEIGHBORS; THE RCC'S ERROR WILL BE CORRECTED ACCORDINGLY."

3. THE USBU ASSEYASSI ARTICLE SUGGESTS THAT COL. QADHAFI INTENDS TO CEASE PRESENT LIBYAN ATTEMPTS AT EITHER ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH EGYPT AND OTHER CONSERVATIVE LEVANTINE ARAB STATES. QADHAFI'S APPARENT DECISION TO SHIFT EMPHASIS TOWARDS THE ARAB NORTH AFRICAN STATES IS PROBABLY A DIRECT RESULT OF RECENT EGYPTIAN-LIBYAN BORDER SKIRMISHES. THE LIBYAN MILITARY IS RUMORED TO HAVE SUFFERED HIGH LOSSES OF BOTH MEN AND MATERIEL DURING THIS MINI-WAR AND PRESUMABLY QADHAFI'S THOUGHTS ARE DOMINATED BY ANTI-EGYPTIAN SENTIMENT. A WESTWARD FOCUS OF LIBYAN INTERESTS FURTHER SUGGESTS THAT EGYPTIAN FORCES INDEED DEALT THE LIBYANS A TELLING MILITARY BLOW AND THUS MOTIVATED THIS SHIFT.

4. WHILE QADHAFI MAY BE MOMENTARILY RECOILING FROM

"SADAT'S LESSON," THE EGYPTIANS NEVERTHELESS WOULD SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE TO CROW ABOUT. RECENT REPORTING FROM EMBASSY TUNIS INDICATES THAT TUNISIAN WORKERS ARE FLOCKING TO LIBYA BY THE THOUSANDS. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF MAURITANIAN LABORERS ARE TO BE RECRUITED FOR WORK IN LIBYA. THIS ALTERNATIVE MANPOWER SOURCE MAY EVENTUALLY REPLACE THE MAJORITY OF THE REMAINING 150,000 EGYPTIAN WORK FORCE HERE. IF PRESENT REPLACEMENT OF EGYPTIAN WORKERS CONTINUES, THEN SADAT'S REGIME WILL LOSE THE BULK OF APPROXIMATELY 1.2 MILLION DOLLARS A DAY IN REMITTANCES SENT HOME BY EGYPTIAN LABORERS IN LIBYA. OBVIOUSLY, THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS LOSS OF REVENUE UPON EGYPTIAN ECONOMY ARE BETTER INTERPRETED BY
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EMBASSY CAIRO. NEVERTHELESS, IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT DESPITE IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN QADHAFI AND SADAT, THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF EGYPTIANS IN LIBYA REMAINS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR THE ECONOMIES OF BOTH COUNTRIES.
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